

Quality and Internal Audit Food Stamp Quality Control Process

Revised August 2003

FNS 310 110 PURPOSE

Each State agency is responsible for conducting QC reviews as part of its Performance Reporting System. For QC reviews, a statistical sample of households shall be selected from households which are participating in the Food Stamp Program (**active cases**) and households for which participation was denied or terminated (**negative cases**). Reviews shall be conducted on active cases to determine if households are eligible and receiving the correct coupon allotments. Reviews of negative cases shall be conducted to determine whether the decision to deny or to terminate the household was correct. Reviews measure the validity of food stamp cases at a given time (the review date).

The State agency shall review cases against the Food Stamp Program standards established in the Food Stamp Act and regulations taking into account any FNS approved waivers that have been implemented or State options to deviate from specific provisions. (States must routinely address QC procedures in certification waiver requests. If the waiver will result in a need to deviate from the procedures in this Handbook, the State agency must identify the regulation citation and Handbook section, describe what the new QC procedure will be, and request approval of that procedure with the certification waiver request.)

OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of QC reviews are to provide:

- A.** A systematic method of measuring the validity of the food stamp caseload;
- B.** A basis for determining error rates;
- C.** A timely, continuous flow of information on which to base corrective action at all levels of administration; and
- D.** A basis for establishing State agency eligibility for Performance Bonus or State agency liability for excessive error rates, and timeliness of application processing (expedited and initial 30 day requirement).

QC Roles and Responsibilities to the Region and Food Stamp Program Specialist:

- The goal of Quality Control is to find the case correct.
- **Initial Finding:** The QC Analyst will write up an initial finding potential error summary including: PACMIS case number; review number; case name; office and region; Volume IV Food Stamp Policy; FNS 310 Policy; and all supporting documentation and verification on the initial finding.
- The analyst will e-mail the initial finding to the Office Tech, who will in return e-mail the initial finding summary to the local office contact(s). The local office contact will contact the assigned QC analyst within 5 business days of receipt to schedule a brainstorming meeting, if necessary. **If no response by the regional QC contact, the initial finding will be cited as an error.**

Initial Finding Potential Error:

- A review process that will be an inclusive partnership between the regions, food stamp program specialist and QC staff.
- Involve the regional QC contact prior to writing the initial findings if possible.
- The Office Tech will e-mail the initial findings to the region contact person(s).
- The regional QC contact person(s) will be responsible to disseminate the initial finding information to the E.C./ESC Manager, team supervisor, and worker, as appropriate.
- The brainstorming meeting may involve the QC analyst, QC unit supervisor, regional representatives (which may include E.C./ESC Manager, team supervisor, worker etc.), and the Food Stamp Program Specialist.
- Time limited (less than 10 days prior to final transmission) findings will be called and e-mailed in to the regional QC contact as soon as the problem has been identified.

Brainstorming Coordination Meeting:

During the brainstorming meeting the group will explore the initial findings and all documents; if further food stamp policy clarification is required, the Food Stamp Program Specialist, in conjunction with the group will draft the question which will be sent to FNS in Denver. The Food Stamp Program Specialist will report the response from FNS to the QC Analyst and regional QC contact(s). If, during the brainstorming meeting, it is determined that additional information or verification is needed, the group will decide how this information will be obtained and who will obtain it. The information gathered will be discussed with the regional contact(s), Food Stamp Program Specialist, QC Analyst, and QC unit supervisor. If necessary, a resolution meeting will occur.

Resolution:

A resolution decision will be negotiated after considering factors developed by the QC analyst, regional representatives and the food stamp program specialists. The decision will be whether to eliminate, reduce or cite the error as drafted initially.

Edit Corrections:

- Selected QC reviews will be edited for correctness. If, as a result of this edit, a possible discrepancy is discovered, the QC Analyst will contact the regional QC contact, if necessary.

Non-Error Cases:

- The QC Analyst will disseminate Information Only cases to the regional QC contact person, who will then ensure that proper action is taken.

Rewards/Certificates: 00% Accuracy Certificates will be sent from the QC Unit to the regional QC contact for cases found to be error free. These will be presented to staff for recognition of a job well done.

Training: Information on the changes to the QC process, pathways and roles of the Region, Policy and QC will be sent to the regional QC contacts.

Food Stamp Program Specialist Role and Responsibilities to QC and the Region:

Involvement of the Food Stamp Program Specialist will be made early in the process by the QC analyst. After the analyst writes up the summary of the initial finding, a copy of the summary is sent to the Food Stamp Program Specialist, in addition to the other designated contact(s).

EXCEPTION: As a last resort, if the clarification requested through our Federal partners is required to write up an initial finding, then QC and/or the food stamp program specialist have the discretion to send FNS 310 or Food Stamp Regulation CFR questions to Denver.

Policy corrections: The Food Stamp Program Specialist will be proactive in making corrections and changes to the Food Stamp Policy, as well as looking at waivers, which have the potential to reduce errors. This effort will be coordinated with the Team for Improving Programs and Simplification (TIPS).

Regions Roles and Responsibilities to QC and Food Stamp Program Specialist:

When the local office is notified of the current sample month QC pulls for active and negative cases, if the verifications have not been imaged in Content Manger, the office tech will notify the local office contact to have the documents imaged within a 24-hour

time frame. If the local office contact is not able to locate the verifications and/or need additional time, please respond immediately to the office tech that there may be a delay in obtaining the requested information.

Initial findings:

The designated region QC contact(s) will receive the initial findings via e-mail. This will allow the local office an opportunity to research the findings, identify whether or not additional information is needed, and prepare strategies to find the case correct.

- Identify questions needing to be asked of the QC analyst, food stamp program specialist, etc.
- Identify and involve appropriate resources in reviewing initial QC findings and determining ideas, which may reduce or eliminate the error.
- Involve (eligibility specialist/employment counselor) in the process, explore why error may have occurred.
- If a collateral contact for the Initial Finding is necessary, this should be coordinated with the QC Analyst.
- Foster a relationship that is less formal and more collaborative. Work and communicate as a team with QC and the Food Stamp Program Specialist.

Final Resolution: The regional QC contact or designee will notify the QC Analyst via email that they concur on the agreed upon resolution.

Celebrate Success: The regions will establish how they will celebrate the accomplishments of staff that receive 100% Accuracy Certificates from QC.

Sharing best practices: Through quality circles, the local office can establish ways of sharing best practices with staff in its region.

QC Review Results: The regional QC contact will be responsible to review the QC findings and determine if additional information is needed to process an under-issuance. Local office will follow the Eligibility Manual Procedures for referring an underpayment.

QC Negative findings resulting in an agency error will be looked at by the local office contact(s) to determine what action is required to restore benefits, send appropriate notice(s) on action taken and notify customer of the need to complete the application process.

QC Review Results – Payment Specialist: Final QC findings resulting in overpayments will be referred by the office tech and sent to the DWS Payment Specialist located in the specific region.